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ABSTRACT

In France, the National Education Federation (Federation d'Education Nationale (FEN)) and its major constituent union, the National Union of Elementary and Middle School Teachers (Syndicat National des Instituteurs et des Professeurs d'Enseignment General de College (SNI-PEGC)), are examples of "intelligent trade unions," i.e., unions that hold a consciously ideological position. As such, in addition to securing material benefits for their members, they believe they have a mission to engage oppressive political and economic forces in a long-term battle for social transformation. Examination of the political history of France from the Third Republic through the post-World War II era and of the evolution of trade unionism provides a context for understanding the rise to power of these unions. Exploration of their organization, ideology, and achievements between 1944 and 1992 facilitates an understanding of the nature of the crisis in which they find themselves. The major achievements of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC in six categories--material benefits, job security, working conditions, teacher empowerment, union empowerment, and educational policy (including educational reform and teacher training)--in some respects have contributed to the onset of the current crisis in their affairs. Other contributing factors include declining membership; internal ideological and political conflict; lack of appealing issues around which to rally old members and attract new ones; and divisions among members because of gender, age, and eductaional background. (IAH)

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TEACHER UNIONISM AS MISSION AND BATTLE;

SUCCESS AND CRISIS IN FRENCH TEACHER UNIONS

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INTRODUCTION

> We always require an outside point to stand on, in order to apply the lever of criticism. (C. G. Jung)[1]

In the summer of 1984 I first made contact with the leaders of two major French teachers' unions. At the time I was in the top leadership of a state affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA). Several years of involvement in the NEA had made me aware of the weaknesses and limitations of that organization. Thus when an opportunity came to return to France in 1984, I decided to try to obtain information about French teachers' unions so that I could have "an outside point to stand on" in reflecting upon my own organization. The International Office of the NEA provided the introductions which I needed.

The history of French teachers' unions is important in and of itself. The National Education Federation (Fédération d'Éducation Nationale or the FEN) and its major constituent union, the National Union of Elementary and Middle School Teachers (Syndicat National des Instituteurs et des Professeurs d'Enseignement Général de Collège or the SNI-PEGC) rank among the most powerful teachers' unions in the world.[2] However, for American scholars who study teachers' unions, information about these French organiza-

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I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Claude Lavy, National Secretary of the SNI-PEGC, and Jean-Paul Roux, National Secretary of the FEN. Their generous help over the years has made this research project possible.

tions serves an addtional purpose. By providing a basis for comparison, it enables them to see American teachers' unions more clearly. This is especially important since, from an international perspective, the French unions are more typical than their American counterparts.[3]

This paper is a study of two organizations. The FEN is a federation of 49 national unions, all of whose members are employed by the Ministry of National Education. At the height of its power it had 450,000 members and organized 90% of its potential adherents. The SNI-PEGC is its largest constituent union; when the FEN had 450,000 members it had more than 300,000.[4] However, its importance goes well beyond its size. The FEN was founded by leaders of the SNI-PEGC, and every Secretary-General of the FEN has been selected from the national leadership of the SNI-PEGC. Not surprisingly, the SNI-PEGC is widely believed to control the FEN.[5]

The FEN and the SNI-PEGC are examples of "intelligent trade unions" according to French sociologist Henri Vacquin.[6] An "intelligent trade union" is one which holds a consciously ideological position. On the basis of this position it is able to analyze social, political, and economic trends. It is thus also able to engage in long range strategic action not only to improve the material situation of its members but also to bring about meaningful social change. As "intelligent trade unions" the FEN and the SNI-PEGC have always understood their purpose as going far beyond merely obtaining benefits for their members. They believe that they also have a special mission--the engagement of oppressive

political and economic forces in a long-term battle for social transformation. In many ways the FEN and the SNI-PEGC have been remarkably successful. Yet, as the twentieth century draws to its close, they are in deep crisis. Paradoxically, their crisis is at least partially the result of their success.

This study is divided into four parts. The first provides enough historical background for American readers to understand parts two, three, and four. The second part describes the early history of French teachers' unions. The third describes the organization, ideology, and achievements of the two groups between 1944 and 1992. In the final part the current crisis is described and analyzed.

BACKGROUND

The Third Republic

Unlike the American Revolution, the French Revolution did not lead to the establishment of a stable form of government. Instead, it ushered in eight decades of political instability during which regimes followed each other in rapid succession. The Second Empire collapsed when France lost the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. In the war's aftermath, French leaders faced the challenging task of designing an effective form of government for their country. Probably the majority of the French people would have preferred a constitutional monarchy; but there were three plausible claimants to the throne. As a result, the Third Republic was established as a compromise; and its founders emphasized that it was a conservative republic. At its beginning the regime lacked widespread

popular support. Its leaders felt particularly threatened on their Right by monarchists and the Catholic Church. As a result they sought an instrument which would both strengthen their political position and unify France. The instrument which they devised was the public school system.[7]

The Reformed School System

French public education had been a rather spotty, unsystematic affair until after the founding of the Third Republic. In the 1880s several reform laws were passed, setting up a centralized public school system and compulsory education. True to their conservative views, the reformers established a stratified, dual system which reflected and reinforced the existing class structure.

The lycée system was designed for children of the upper and middle classes. It was public, but not free. "Elementary classes" taught young children the basics; but the major emphasis, especially in the higher grades, was on a classical education. Successful completion of a lycée was the prerequisite for admission to a university. Teachers in the lycée system were called professeurs just like teachers in the universities and they held university degrees. They were civil servants.

The école system was for the masses. Children learned the basics during their years of compulsory schooling; bright students could attend an optional form of lower secondary education which was part of this system. The teachers were themselves products of the école system. They had graduated from normal schools and were called instituteurs (m.) or institutrices (f.). They too had civil

service status but were paid less than the professeurs. It should be noted that this dual school system not only stratified students on the basis of class; it stratified teachers in the same way.

Although the lycée system formed the elites who would assume leadership roles in the Third Republic, French leaders considered the école system more important in maintaining the regime. Thus they emphasized the recruitment and training of instituteurs and institutrices. Prospective teachers were recruited among bright boys and girls from the working and farming classes. They were selected on the basis of a rigorous, highly competitive national examination. Selection entitled them to attend a free teacher education program in a normal school. These institutions were Spartan, sex-segregated boarding schools. In them boys and girls--largely 14-17 years of age--were trained not only to teach but to serve as "lay apostles" for the Third Republic.[8]

By the early 1900s elementary teachers began to feel disillusioned with the "conservative republic."[9] However, their high sense of calling persisted. For example, James Marangé, Secretary-General of the FEN in the late 1960s, recalled his own normal school training in the 1930s:

> Very quickly the prospective teacher realized that teaching was a career, not a job. The difference is a basic one. It is from that point that my calling was born in me. From the moment that I was admitted to the normal school. . .I understood that elementary teaching is not just a job, like other work, but actually a career, that is to say, a mission. And I am using the word in its strongest sense. Is it necessary to add that the whole conception of our teacher training program necessarily led us to think "mission" and not "work"?[10]

This attitude has by no means completely died out, although it is

waning. For example, a man who is currently a Technical Advisor of the SNI-PEGC and who attended normal school in the late 1960s stated in a May 1991 interview: "In normal school we learned that teaching is like the priesthood."[11]

These young people were sent out into the villages and rural townships of France to instill republican values in children whose parents were often still under the sway of the church and the aristocracy. Frequently they were not welcome, and their exercise of their profession became a battle against powerful social forces. Marangé fondly remembered his Great-Aunt Julienne, who had taught in an <u>école</u> in the 1880s and 1890s. At her funeral an administrator eulogized Julienne, saying:

> Her far-seeing leaders constantly assigned her to combat posts. She fought with valor a battle which was often a painful one and defended the ideals of reason, tolerance, justice, and goodness to the point of victory.[12]

The elementary teachers' confidence in the goodness and justice of the Third Republic declined early in the twentieth century, but they retained an exalted view of their profession. They shifted their institutional allegiance elsewhere--to left-wing political parties and to the trade union movement. Quite naturally, they understood trade unionism, too, as mission and battle.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS: 1863-1943

<u>The French Labor Movement</u>. The FEN and the SNI-PEGC grew out of the broader French Labor Movement and have always maintained close ties with it. Therefore, any historical study of these two groups must begin with some consideration of the French Labor Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

France industrialized later than Great Britain and Germany, so her trade union movement lagged behind similar movements in these other countries. Moreover, throughout the first six decades of the nineteenth century French law did not permit workers to form associations for any purpose. The law was changed in 1864, when it became legal for workers to enter into temporary coalitions. Although the first French trade union was not established until 1866, in 1864 representatives of French workers attended the London meeting which led to the founding of the International Workers' Association. In 1868, a second modification of French law permitted workers to form permanent organizations. Finally, in 1884 the French Parliament adopted legislation which gave private sector employees and employers the right to join together in unions or professional organizations.13

During these early decades trade union leaders struggled over the issue of just what their purpose should be. There were some, of course, who believed that the objective of a union should be simply to obtain improved conditions for workers: higher salaries, shorter working hours, more job security, and the like. However, from the earliest period a significant proportion of the leaders in both the French and the broader European labor movements believed that their organizations could not afford to restrict themselves to such narrow demands. They considered the precarious situation of wage earners to be the product of a much broader problem: the economic, social, and political organization of society. For example, in 1864 the French trade unionist Tolain wrote:

> Universal suffrage gave us our political majority, but we still must emancipate ourselves socially. . . .Every day we are subjected to the legitimate or arbitrary conditions established by capital. . . .People who, deprived of both education and capital, cannot resist these egotistical and oppressive demands through freedom and solidarity find that their interests remain subordinate to the interests of others.[14]

Gradually these trade unionists came to believe that the basic problem was the exploitation of one class by another and the state's support of this exploitation. This analysis implied that they should seek the transformation of society as a whole rather try to obtain piecemeal reforms of it.[15]

Having agreed upon a general diagnosis of the problem, the leaders of the young movement could not agree upon the best course of action to take. At the risk of some simplification, it can be said that three contrasting approaches were advocated. Two of these approaches called for revolution. Followers of Karl Marx believed that the proletariat had to be organized into a revolutionary political party which would capture the state. Trade unions should be directly linked to such a revolutionary party. Prior to the revolution their major purpose was to stir up discontent among the workers. This discontent could then be channeled toward revolution. Eventually a split occurred among the Communists; after the Russian Revolution the Trotskyists broke with Lenin and went underground.[16]

A second revolutionary group was the anarchists, often called anarcho-syndicalists. Very suspicious of politics and indeed of every form of government and hierarchical organization, they believed that trade unions should remain completely independent of

all political parties, including revolutionary ones. In their opinion, social transformation could best be brought about through a general strike. Such a strike should begin in key sectors of the economy such as transportation and food production. From there it would spread, permitting workers to abolish the government. The result would be a classless society based upon local communities.[17]

In contrast to both types of revolutionaries, the reformists did not believe in revolution at all. Rather they believed that workers could best transform the system by working within it. Reformists' preferred type of action was negotiation, although they were willing to use "direct action" such as petitions, demonstrations, and strikes when negotiating was unfruitful. By negotiating with employers or with the government, trade unions could win strategic victories which would progressively undermine the capitalist economic system. In their view, a parallel action had to be conducted; while trade unions negotiated for strategic victories, a workers' political party would also have to strive for progressive social changes. Gradually, society would be transformed until it truly reflected the values of freedom, equality, and brotherhood.[18]

It will be noticed that none of these approaches assigned a major role to the educational system. The French trade union movement did not ignore education; in the 1870s union leaders advocated free, public education for all children. Moreover, they stressed the importance of education for workers and sought to offer it through union organizations. However, they did not

consider schooling a major instrument for social transformation. Rather they saw it as a necessary, but not sufficient, precondition for change. A typical point of view is offered by James Marangé, former Secretary-General of the FEN, in his 1976 memoirs:

> The educational system is a direct reflection of politics in our society, of the power relationships between classes.[19]

Thus, leaders of French trade unions tend to see public schools as institutions which are themselves in need of transformation, not as vehicles through which major changes can be brought about.

The existence of these different approaches to social change has made it impossible for the French labor movement to build and maintain unity. Unity in a giant labor confederation has been attempted three times: during World War I, during the late 1930s, and right after World War II. All three times unity has been shattered by events involving the Soviet Union--by the Russian Revolution, by the Russo-German Nonaggression Pact, and by the onset of the Cold War respectively. This vulnerability to events in the Soviet Union results from the fact that a significant number of French trade unionists are Communists who have long found themselves caught between Moscow, the French Communist Party, and their fellow trade unionists in France.

All three approaches--technically called "tendencies"--coexist within the contemporary FEN and SNI-PEGC. It is not a coincidence that the current crisis within those organizations is occurring at a time when Communism itself is in crisis. The crisis has causes which go far beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union, but recent

events in Eastern Europe have shaken the FEN and the SNI-PEGC.

Early Teachers' Groups. The teachers in the école system were members of the working class, and their students were predominantly working class. Therefore, from the beginning they were aware of the burgeoning trade union movement and sympathized with it. The passage of the Law of March 21, 1884, making it legal for private sector employees to unionize, encouraged elementary[20] teachers to form unions. In a single month in 1887, elementary teachers founded two "autonomous" groups: a trade union and an amicale, or mutual aid society. They formed these groups even though an 1885 court decision had held that civil servants were not covered by the new law. The reaction from the authorities was swift. In an official statement, Minister of Public Instruction Eugène Spuller made it clear why teachers could not unionize:

> Public elementary teachers are civil servants. . ., as such they are part of a legally established hierarchy. . . .They are not "autonomous" either individually or collectively. The "autonomy" of civil servants has another name: anarchy.[21]

In spite of this stern prohibition, French teachers continued to form groups. However, for a long time they did not call them trade unions. Rather, they used the less threatening name amicale, or mutual aid society. The mutual aid societies formed around the alumni associations of the normal schools and flourished between 1887 and 1920. Teachers organized for various reasons. One was that, assigned to small schools in isolated villages far from home, they were lonely. The mutual aid societies provided a chance to mingle with other teachers, to exchange teaching ideas, and even to

court. Another was that their pay was low, and they thought that perhaps through collective action they could encourage the government to raise their salaries. A third reason was that they felt under attack. In their lonely villages they often had two sets of enemies: the clergy and local politicians. Finally, they felt that their administrators were too domineering. Principals tried to regulate numerous details of their private lives, and higher level administrators punished teachers who became too independent by transferring them to the least desirable schools. For all these reasons teachers sought the moral support of colleagues in mutual aid societies. Through these organizations they tried to advance the material and professional interests of teachers, defend members against arbitrary administrative actions, and provide benefits such as group insurance plans. By 1900 these groups had attracted so many members that they held a national convention in Paris. In 1902 they formed a national organization, the Federation of Mutual Aid Societies.[22]

However, in spite of their popularity, the mutual aid societies were unsatisfactory in many ways. They had little power and were often perceived as docilely cooperating with the administration. As a result, in 1903 French teachers began to form organizations which more closely resembled trade unions. At first, they ambiguously called their groups "union-like mutual aid societies" or "Emancipations." Soon, despite the fact that teachers' unions were illegal, they openly used the word "trade union." This movement spread rapidly, and in 1905 representatives

of numerous Emancipations met in Paris to form the Federation of Departmental Unions of Elementary Teachers . The leaders of the Paris affiliate were indicted for illegally founding a union, but elected leaders chose to look the other way. They never came to trial. The group held its first national convention in 1906 and in 1909 joined the largest confederation of trade unions, the General Labor Confederation (Confédération Générale du Travail or CGT). More militant than the mutual aid societies, the trade unions were especially concerned about oppressive school administration. Among their early demands were teachers' councils which would share power with principals and an end to principals' secret reports about teachers. They also protested the adoption of textbooks which they considered militaristic.[23]

The new trade union movement was in no sense a rival of the older mutual aid societies. The interrelationships between the two teachers' groups and the broader labor movement is well illustrated by the story of Jean and Josette Cornec. Jean and Josette were born on farms in northwestern France in the 1880s. Since both were excellent students, they were recruited and trained as teachers in the <u>école</u> system. After they gained tenure they became active in teachers' groups--Josette in a mutual aid society with the suggestive name "Emancipatrix" and Jean in one of the new trade unions. Josette also belonged as an individual member to the General Labor Confederation; Jean eventually joined "Emancipatrix." Dual and triple affiliations were not uncommon. Their friendship grew out of their mutual interest in reading books and articles

about the labor movement. They provided a topic for gossip in their villages by corresponding regularly--not about romance, but about union ideology. Ultimately, it was Josette who proposed. Married in 1915, they honeymooned at the illegal national convention of the teachers' new trade union.

In 1918 the Cornecs became embroiled in a controversy with their inspector (supervisor) because they refused to use government-provided patriotic posters as the basis for their social studies instruction. In the ensuing conflict the mutual aid society, the teachers' union, and the Union of Reunited Workers of the Port of Brest all became involved. The Cornecs eventually won, but their victory was the result of their own courage and tenacity as well as of their use of secret information which Jean had gathered about the inspector's wartime activities. They emerged from the conflict acutely aware of the weakness of both the mutual aid society and the teachers' union. This episode convinced them that teachers had to have more powerful unions.[24]

The Early Years of the SNI-PEGC. The Cornecs were not the only ones who had reached the conclusion that teachers needed more powerful unions to defend themselves. Immediately after World War I, the election of a relatively progressive parliament led teachers to move rapidly to establish their unions on a firmer basis. In many cases mutual aid societies and trade unions merged. In 1920 when a conservative government came to power, the leaders of the new groups knew that repression would swiftly follow. Thus they founded the SNI-PEGC on September 24, 1920, hoping that the

existence of a national organization would distract government attention from local affiliates. They were not disappointed; on the next day the three top leaders of the new union were indicted.

However, SNI-PEGC continued to be active. It joined the General Labor Confederation (CGT), which at this time included member unions from all three "tendencies." The CGT was going through a severe internal crisis. The Communist unions, probably influenced by the new USSR, were pushing for a workers' revolution in France. The reformist unions rejected this notion, and the result was a split in 1922. The Communists established their own confederation; it included a Communist teachers' union. SNI-PEGC, which had reformist leadership, remained in the CGT.[25]

Over the next 18 years, SNI-PEGC--never truly "legal"--laid the foundation for its future work. It set up its headquarters in Paris and began to publish a monthly newsletter. It began to hold national conventions. By 1929 the monthly newsletter had evolved into a weekly magazine, L'École Libératrice [The liberating school]. It is still published today.[26]

True to their reformist ideals, the leaders of SNI-PEGC did not limit themselves to working to satisfy the "material demands" of their members. Rather, they understood their mission as a battle for a more just society. As early as 1922 SNI-PEGC adopted a proposal in support of the democratizing of education. Their plan called for integrating the dual school system into a single, unified system in which all children would attend primary school and a transitional middle school. At age 14 children would be

assigned to either a classical program, a modern program, or a technical school. All would attend school until age 18.[27]

Another concern was the "battle against the arbitrary." The union wanted to put an end to arbitrary administrative decisions about teachers' careers and to reduce political influence on hiring, promotion, and transfers. As a first step towards the achievement of this goal in 1925 they won the right to sit on advisory councils.[28]

In the 1930s the SNI-PEGC established a number of mutuals to provide low cost benefits for students and teachers. These included organizations which provided low cost insurance and reasonably priced day camps and vacations. Although the mutuals could be understood as groups which met the material needs of the members, union leaders had an ideological justification for them:

> [They] had as their object to respond through solidarity to the specific needs of teachers and students and aimed at emancipating them from the profit system.[29]

The SNI-PEGC was also politically active. Its leaders, who were largely pacifists, took public stands against militarism and the arms race. In February 1934 several extreme right wing groups attacked the National Assembly, causing the CGT to call for the first general strike in its history to defend democratic institutions and political rights. Although the Ministry of Education opposed teachers' involvement in the strike, the SNI-PEGC was a major participant. As the threat of fascism grew stronger, the union continued to play a role in defending democratic government. Its leaders helped found the "Vigilance Committee for Anti-fascist

Intellectuals" in 1934. The SNI-PEGC was also involved in the formation of the Popular Front, a coalition of progressive groups which organized politically to try to win the elections of 1936. The Popular Front succeeded briefly; for about a year France had a moderately Left government.[30]

It might seem that such political activity was contrary to the reformist belief that social transformation was to be brought about through the parallel activities of trade unions and workers' parties which remained <u>independent</u> of each other. Indeed, its leaders knew that they could be criticized on these grounds. Jean-Claude Barbarant, the current secretary general of the SNI-PEGC, explained SNI-PEGC's position in a recent book:

> SNI justified its political commitment on the grounds that the danger of fascism made it necessary to support the Popular Front in order to maintain the independence of trade unions. But it insisted that there be no confusion of union responsibility and political responsibility and opposed the simultaneous holding of union and party positions by the same individuals.[31]

Of course, the efforts of the SNI-PEGC and other groups to halt the spread of fascism in France failed. In 1940, Hitler's armies invaded; French defeat followed swiftly. As the collaborationist Vichy Regime looked around for someone to blame for this humiliating military defeat, it seized rather improbably upon elementary education. It dissolved the normal schools and purged the civil service and the teaching force of anyone deemed an "element of disorder, an inveterate politician, or incapable."[32] The SNI-PEGC, which had long understood its mission in religious

terms, now gained its martyrs. Two national leaders who were deported to concentration camps died there.

THE MODERN PERIOD: 1944-1992

The Move to Autonomy

In August 1944, with the city of Paris still occupied by the Germans, several SNI-PEGC leaders armed themselves and liberated their headquarters. When democratic government was restored a few months later, they and other French labor leaders were ready to rebuild their movement, which had been crushed by the war. In the euphoria of liberation and Allied victory, leaders were temporarily able to forget their pre-war divisions. All three tendencies--the Communists, the anarcho-syndicalists, and the reformists--cooperated in re-establishing a unified General Labor Confederation (CGT). By 1946 the CGT counted 6,000,000 members.[33]

The SNI-PEGC was part of the CGT during the early post-war period. Within the CGT it was also part of a federation of 33 public education unions. This federation, which had been formed in 1929, took the name "National Education Federation," or FEN, in 1946. By federating, unions which organized employees of the Ministry of National Education could act cooperatively when such action seemed advantageous. For the FEN and its member unions this was a period of intense activity--and at last their activity was fully legal, for the 1945 Civil Service Act and the 1946 Constitution of the Fourth Republic had recognized the right of civil servants to organize trade unions. Their three major goals at this time were: (1) obtaining salary increases for education workers;

(2) re-establishing and extending their system of mutuals; and (3) fighting against a growing movement to obtain public aid for private schools.[34]

In the midst of this work, however, an old problem resurfaced. With the deterioration of the relationship between the U. S. and the USSR, internal conflicts began to divide the CGT. Its top leaders were Communists; to reformists they seemed increasingly controlled by the French Communist Party and its Moscow allies. Moreover, "foreign agents" from the United States also seemed to be active within the CGT. In late 1947 a portion of the confederation seceded to form a new organization called "Force Ouvrière," or "Workers' Force." To many French labor leaders this group seemed to be under American control. The reformist leaders of the SNI-PEGC and the FEN faced a dilemma. Unity with the other tendencies provided the public education unions with the large membership and power which they needed to push their agenda with the government. Henri Aigueperse, a top leader of both groups, argued that they should maintain their unity and their power by becoming autonomous. A referendum was held in 1948, and the FEN withdrew from the CGT. The FEN's leaders believed that the federation would remain autonomous for only a short time. Forty-four years later the organization is still autonomous. The majority of both the FEN and the SNI-PEGC are still reformists. However, during the 1960s several unions, including the secondary teachers' union and the college professors' union, fell under Communist control. Even

though this turn of events caused internal conflict, unity has been maintained--thus far.[35]

Organizational Structure

The founders of the autonomous FEN faced the challenge of devising an organizational structure which would permit both effective action and cohesiveness. Like all teachers' unions they faced a dilemma. Broad membership which encompasses many different job categories provides the large numbers which give the organization an adequate operating budget and political clout. Yet broad membership also reduces a union's ability to address certain types of issues. For example, secondary teachers, administrators, school nurses, and guidance counselors are unlikely to be concerned about adequate planning time for elementary teachers. Thus unions with broad memberships tend to ignore issues which concern part of the group and to focus on matters of concern to all. In addition to having to resolve this common dilemma, the founders of the autonomous FEN faced a second one: how to accommodate the three tendencies of the French Labor Movement within their organization.

The leaders of the FEN resolved the first dilemma by choosing a federal structure. The FEN is a federation of 49 categorical education unions. Many of the unions organize teachers. For example, in addition to the SNI-PEGC which organizes elementary and middle school teachers, there are unions for secondary teachers, university professors, professors in normal schools, physical education teachers, and vocational teachers. Administrators have several unions, and so do various types of support personnel. The

job categories within which each union can organize are carefully spelled out in the FEN's Constitution. This reduces competition for members. In addition, both the FEN and its constituent unions are structured so that there are official union governing bodies which correspond to each level of government in France.[36]

This structure provides organizational flexibility. The organization can effectively address both broad, general issues and matters which are of concern to a minority. For example, teacher unions negotiate their salaries with the national government. For this purpose, the FEN collaborates with the other civil service federations and they all meet jointly with government representatives. Salary negotiations thus occur at a supra-federal level. The FEN handles negotiations in the area of general education policies which would potentially affect many unions--the recent education reform provides an example. Each categorical union deals with issues which concern it alone. For instance, in the mid-1980s the SNI-PEGC fought a proposed increase in the power of elementary principals. Moreover, local affiliates of the appropriate categorical union address problems which concern only their geographical area. A county government which was not adequately maintaining vocational high schools would be approached by the local representatives of the vocational teachers' union.

Cross-cutting the FEN and its constituent unions are its tendencies. There are three main tendencies. The largest is called Unity, Independence, Democracy or UID.[37] It is reformist. Next in size is Unity and Action or UA. It is Communist. Much

smaller than either is the anarcho-syndicalists' group, Emancipated School or EE. It is possible to start new tendencies, and new ones surface frequently. However, they have little staying power.

Within the unions these tendencies function like political parties within a parliamentary democracy. Before each internal election they prepare a platform which details their policy proposal for the union. These platforms are published in official union magazines. The tendencies also nominate a slate of candidates for office. Since elections are based on proportional representation, minority tendencies normally have representatives in the various governance bodies. However, the highest governance group--the executive committee--is selected by the tendency which wins the largest percentage of votes in the election and is thus the "Majority." The executive committee selects the secretary-general. This arrangement is also similar to that used in parliamentary democracies; the executive committee corresponds to the cabinet and the secretary-general to the prime minister. As in a parliamentary government, the majority tendency is expected to adhere to its platform as it runs the organization. Before each election it publishes a report of its activities since the last election. Minority tendencies publish criticisms of this report.[38]

Union Ideology

The FEN and the SNI-PEGC are consciously ideological or "intelligent" teachers' unions. They adhere to a well articulated conception of the nature of society, what trade unions should do about major social problems, and how they should achieve their

ends. Leaders express these views in union publications, at meetings, and in public pronouncements and they express them with remarkable consistency. Moreover, this ideology seems to play a major role in establishing their identity. In the interview situation, leaders of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC frequently make their ideological position clear even when the interview questions do not ask for such clarity. For example, in May 1991 a National Secretary of the SNI-PEGC insisted on making the following statement at the beginning of his interview:

> First of all, I want to explain that French trade unionism has a tradition. It was born with workers' unions. Therefore, it is a form of trade unionism which deals with the problems of education--like salaries and working conditions--but it also deals with questions relating to the structure of society. . . . Our union positions itself within a larger vision of a democratic society. So we take positions on political problems and we have the following departments in our union: Education; Material Demands; Rights, Freedom, and Society; Economic and Social Questions.

Leaders frequently insist that their union is based on "values." These values are those of democracy as the French Left understands it: freedom, equality, brotherhood, peace, the autonomy of the state, and social progress. Of course, French society as presently constituted does not reflect these values particularly well. This failure is explained largely in economic terms. Leaders see the social order as consisting of two broad classes: employers and employees. The latter group includes all salaried workers, even technicians, middle managers, and teachers who may not consider themselves "workers" at all. Yet because they are employees they share the problem of all salaried workers: "the

struggle against the alienation of the human being, [the struggle] for the dignity of work and [the struggle] for security in the future."[39] As one might expect, the leaders of the SNI-PEGC and the FEN tend to be critical of capitalism. They see it as an economic system which elevates profit above human values. The current Secretary-General of the SNI-PEGC wrote in a 1989 editorial:

> If for neo-conservative capitalism the objective is profit and social justice is an ultimate by-product of the economic system, those of us who are humanists see social justice as simultaneously the engine and the goal of economic growth.[40]

However, they consider social forces other than capitalism to be oppressive. In their literature they occasionally point out that when the state is an employer it often takes on oppressive characteristics, and they had few illusions about the lot of workers in the countries of the former Communist bloc. Thus, the division of society into employed and employer classes is one which transcends economic systems. The elimination of capitalism would not automatically mean the appearance of social justice.

In such a situation, trade unions play an important role. Their major goal is the emancipation of human beings. In doing so they should function as independent "countervailing forces" which both challenge the status quo and make concrete suggestions for altering it. Although unions must strive to improve the material conditions of the workers whom they represent, they must do so in a "coherent" manner. That is to say, material demands should be part of a larger, long-term strategy for bringing about social change. In their view working in a piecemeal fashion for improved

material conditions will ultimately be self-defeating, for such gains will prove temporary. Only if the larger economic and social situation changes as well will the changes be lasting ones. Former Secretary-General of the FEN, Yannick Simbron, wrote in March 1991:

> The trade union movement must remain one which carries within itself a logic for transforming society and the will to do so. . . .Trade unions must make demands, but those demands have no meaning unless they are part of a vision of society with a moral meaning which is based upon certain values.[41]

Major Achievements of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC

"Nothing has ever been bestowed upon us; everything has been conquered."[42] In its 1990 "Activity Report" the reformist majority of the SNI-PEGC used those words to describe its accomplishments. In this section the major achievements of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC since World War II will be described. They have been grouped under six headings: material benefits, security, working conditions, teacher empowerment, union empowerment, and education policy.

Material benefits. The salaries of French civil servants are determined by using a combination of a base salary, a multiplier on an index of several hundred steps, and several possible supplements. Thus, the FEN uses two primary approaches to salary negotiations with the Civil Service Ministry: either it seeks to raise the base or it seeks to obtain a "reclassification" for teachers by having them all raised a number of steps. Major reclassifications were obtained in 1948 and 1957. In 1961 the FEN used a series of rotating strikes to pressure the government to raise the final step for all teachers. Throughout the 1970s--a period of high inflation--the FEN successfully negotiated to keep

its members' salaries in step with the rising cost of living. In the 1980s, however, the organization has been less successful; teachers have experienced declining purchasing power. Relative to other countries, in the 1970s French teachers were paid less well than Germans, about the same as Americans and Scandinavians, and more than Britons. It is difficult to determine exactly how much French teachers earn because supplements are accorded based on family size, distance from the place of work, and geographical region. However, at current exchange rates beginning elementary teachers earn a base pay of $18,200 and at the end of their careers, elementary teachers earn a base pay of $29,200. Since many teachers receive supplements and secondary teachers are paid more than elementary ones, average figures would be higher.[43]

The FEN considers the passage of the 1946 Social Security Act one of its major victories, not only for its members but for all French citizens. The Social Security System provides the national health care program. The FEN, with other trade unions, was also instrumental in obtaining the passage of a government-sponsored unemployment program. Other fringe benefits are provided at reduced rates through the network of mutuals developed by the FEN for employees of the Ministry of National Education. "The FEN's Empire"--as this network is often called--includes reasonably priced automobile insurance, retirement supplements, banking services, vacations, day camps, psychiatric care, and catalog sales of popular consumer goods.[44]

Job security. Job security has always been extremely important to

French teachers. Although certified teachers had tenure rights in the early 1900s, they experienced negative evaluations, involuntary transfers, and political promotions. Thus, the FEN and the SNI-PEGC have devoted much attention to eliminating these aspects of what they call the "arbitrary." It has, however, been necessary for the SNI-PEGC to fight one tenure battle since 1945. In the early 1950s the government began to hire large numbers of untrained teachers to fill the classrooms of the baby-boom generation. These teachers were not originally granted tenure, but were kept on the payroll as permanent substitutes. The union worked for years to obtain tenure status for them; it finally succeeded in 1973 with the government's adoption of the Guichard Plan.

Both the SNI-PEGC and the FEN have worked to minimize the importance of evaluations and to obtain appeals processes for teachers who are dissatisfied with their evaluations. Today evaluations of French teachers are rare and largely pro forma. The unions' approach to the issue of transfers has been to pressure the government to use point systems to determine who will be transferred to desirable posts; today the transfer procedure is largely computerized. As for promotion, it is often necessary to take a competitive examination to qualify for higher-level positions. However, once the examination has been passed, a point system based largely on seniority is used in promoting individuals. As a result of these policies, teachers are well protected from political and other types of pressure. A 1976 study by the International Federation of Elementary Teachers determined that teachers had more job

security in France than in any other country studied.[45]

Working conditions. Class size, student-contact hours, and the performance of custodial duties by teachers have been major concerns of the teachers' unions within the FEN. In the 1960s elementary classes of 35-40 students were not uncommon; today the average class size has been reduced to between 20 and 25. Required student-contact hours are low by American standards. Depending on their level of qualification, secondary teachers have either 15 or 18 required student-contact hours per week. One major victory of the SNI-PEGC during the 1980s was obtaining a reduction of weekly student-contact hours for middle school teachers to 18. Elementary teachers' required hours were recently reduced from 27 to 26. French teachers do not usually perform such custodial duties as supervising lunch rooms, monitoring halls, or checking on lavatories. If they agree to such duties they receive supplementary pay. Usually, however, paraprofessionals are responsible for custodial responsibilities.[46]

Teacher empowerment. Principals in contemporary French elementary, middle, and high schools have virtually no power over their teachers. They do not hire them; they have no input into their tenure, transfer, or promotion; and they do not play a major role in their evaluation. Rather, French schools are governed by a series of elected councils on which teachers have seats. In the mid-1980s Minister of National Education René Monory tried to give elementary principals more power over their teachers; he was bitterly--and successfully--opposed by the SNI-PEGC. At higher

levels of the educational system, Joint Administrative Commissions play an important governance role. Every three years teachers elect representatives to serve on these commissions.[47]

Union empowerment. In the 47 years since World War II ended, the FEN and the SNI-PEGC have built and consolidated their own power through a number of key "conquests," to use one of their favorite terms. Chronologically, conquests were the Civil Service Act and the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, both adopted in 1946. They legalized civil service unions and gave all unions constitutional protections. Included was the right to strike.

In 1947, Joint Administrative Commissions were created. Composed of equal numbers of representatives of the administration and of teachers' unions, these bodies have the right to make decisions about everything which relates to teachers' careers: transfers, advancement on the salary schedule, changes in assignment, etc. Legally their role is advisory; in practice the administration almost always accepts teachers' recommendations.[48] Because of their function, these commissions provide an important base for union power. The FEN and the SNI-PEGC have understood how to use them to this end. By 1973, even under a conservative government, the SNI-PEGC was perceived as "co-managing" the educational system through the Joint Administrative Commissions. Said an official in the Ministry of National Education: "We do nothing without the agreement of the union. . . .Not a memo leaves without the SNI-PEGC's advice."[49]

Another practice which has strengthened union power began in

the 1960s. At the national level the Ministry agreed to give about a dozen union leaders release time so that they could work for their organizations full time. After the student riots of 1968--in which the FEN played an important mediating role--the Ministry expanded this practice, making it possible for a considerable number of leaders to have release time at the national level and for each <u>département</u> (similar to a county) to have at least one leader who devoted full time to union affairs. This practice was given legal standing in the Civil Service Act of 1983. Release time for leaders has given them the opportunity to become experts in specialty areas and to develop and maintain the network of contacts essential in political work. It has also made it unnecessary for the French unions to rely upon the services of paid professional staff who might have ambitions inconsistent with the needs and wishes of the members.[50]

The FEN won yet another victory after the riots of 1968. In the aftermath of that traumatic event, the government agreed to negotiate salaries with the FEN and other civil service federations. As in the case of the release time for leaders, this practice was long followed informally without having a legal basis. It, too, was legalized in the Civil Service Act of 1983.[51]

<u>Educational policy</u>. The SNI-PEGC and the FEN have always made it clear that they do not limit their interests to "bread and butter issues." They have always held positions on general educational policy as well. It must be admitted that in one policy area they have known only defeat. They have always opposed government aid to

private schools. In 1951 they fought against the Marie and Barangé Acts, which granted small vouchers and scholarships to private school students. They lost. In 1959 they fought against the Debré Act, which offered substantial funding to private schools. Again, they lost. In 1981-1984 they fought the private school aid battle again, this time with a friendly Socialist government in power. They sought to have private education integrated into the public system. They lost a third time. In this educational policy area, they have achieved no success.[52] In some other areas, however, they have accomplished quite a bit.

One of these is teacher training. At the beginning of the post-war period elementary teachers were hired on the basis of a high school diploma and a year of post-secondary teacher training. In-service training was virtually non-existent. The SNI-PEGC has worked consistently to obtain better pre- and in-service training for elementary teachers. Over the years they have gradually increased the required educational level of beginning elementary teachers. Today, these teachers must have a high school diploma plus five years of post-secondary training, much of it in a university. Moreover, they have made substantial gains in in-service training. In 1971 they struggled with the government for six months over the in-service training issue. They gained for each elementary teacher the right to 36 weeks of in-service training during the course of a career. This training can be taken as either six-week or three month leaves of absence for professional development. While teachers are on leave, student teachers are

in charge of their classes.[53]

In the 1980s the unions won an even more significant victory. Since the early 1920s the SNI-PEGC had had a proposal for education reform. In the 1970s the union developed a more elaborate proposal. It sponsored several conferences about French education; out of these grew a detailed policy proposal for a "Fundamental School." In essence this proposal called for democratizing French education by providing more individualized attention for children; deciding upon their educational futures later; and integrating the school system, eliminating the old distinction between the école system and the lycée system. In the late 1980s Mitterrand's government passed legislation which included major components of this proposed reform. Significantly, the recent reforms completely integrate the teaching force, abolishing the distinctions between elementary and secondary teachers. Beginning in the fall of 1992, elementary teachers will even be called "professors" just as the secondary teachers are. Moreover, equal pay scales for elementary and secondary teachers will be phased in.[54]

THE CURRENT CRISIS

The Crisis Described

By almost any standards the FEN and the SNI-PEGC have been successful teachers' unions. They have gained significant benefits for their members and have also exercised considerable influence on broader education policy issues. This success is especially impressive because as a whole the French labor movement is fragmented and weak; it has historically had low membership

figures. In the French environment the FEN and the SNI-PEGC have stood out as notable exceptions. They have been powerful, unified organizations with a broad membership base. Yet, as they move toward the end of the twentieth century, they are in deep crisis.

In part the crisis is one of membership. The FEN once organized 90% of the profession; that figure has now fallen below 50%. The drop in membership began in the late 1970s and has continued steadily since then. The SNI-PEGC has suffered major membership losses as well. However, the membership decline is not limited to the SNI-PEGC; it affects most of the FEN's unions. In part, this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that union membership generally is declining in France and throughout the world.[55]

Even so, it is important to reflect upon the reasons which many French teachers give for not joining. They see the FEN and the SNI-PEGC leaders as remote bureaucrats who are part of the system. In their view they are out of touch with the thinking of most teachers. They value the unions for the historical role which they played but consider them largely superfluous now.[56]

Declining membership is a serious problem for any organization. But the FEN has a second problem, equally serious. Internal conflicts are tearing the organization apart. From the perspective of the reformist majority which leads the FEN and the SNI-PEGC, the problem lies in the minority tendencies and in the member unions which they lead, especially the secondary teachers' union. In their view the minority tendencies and the secondary teachers'

union are becoming increasingly autonomous. They take positions contrary to those of the FEN, hold meetings from which federal leaders are excluded, and increasingly act as if they are not part of the federation. Another aspect of the problem is the effect of the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union upon the Communists within the organization. It has left the Communist tendency in disarray. Moreover, it has encouraged the Trotskyist Communists, who maintained a low profile for decades, to become active again. Over the years they have infiltrated a number of the unions and have reached key leadership positions within them. Now, with the Leninist conception of Communism discredited, they seem to be trying to take over the FEN.[57]

In all of the confusion many voices are calling for the FEN to depart from its traditional ideological, "intelligent" approach and concentrate on the material demands of the members. This development disturbs many of the reformists in leadership positions.[58]

From the perspective of the minority tendencies, especially the Communist one, the FEN is increasingly controlled by the SNI-PEGC. Moreover, the reformist leaders of both organizations are much too cozy with the Socialist government. They have ceased to be as politically independent as a trade union should be. The secondary teachers are especially distressed. They feel that the elementary teachers are ambitious and want to take over portions of secondary education. They also resent the fact that the government is imposing upon them educational reforms which seem to have been developed largely to please elementary teachers. They believe that

few people in the FEN or in the government are taking their legitimate concerns seriously.[59]

These internal conflicts have become publicly visible. At the FEN's convention at Clermont-Ferrand in February 1991, the quarreling became so intense that it was a headline story across France. One of the major themes of the convention was reforming the FEN. However, the reformist majority made a motion to hold an extraordinary convention in 1992 to completely restructure the organization. This motion barely passed and has angered the minority tendencies, who see the proposed restructuring as the majority's strategy for remaining the majority. The conflict erupted into the open again in June 1991 when the FEN forcibly deposed its Secretary-General, Yannick Simbron. Even the Socialist newspapers which are usually sympathetic to the teachers' unions suggested that the "bosses of the SNI-PEGC" were struggling to tighten their control over the federation. The extraordinary convention to restructure the FEN has been scheduled for the first week of December 1992. As of this writing, then, the future of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC are uncertain.[60]

Reasons for the Crisis

In an interview in May 1991 I asked a National Secretary of the SNI-PEGC the reasons for the current crisis. His answer provides a good introduction to this discussion:

> There are many, many reasons and they are contradictory. No one believes in anything anymore. Teachers are increasingly individualistic. Another reason is the organizational structure of our union. Also, trade unionism is a machine which produces something for which there is no longer any

demand. Teachers feel more secure than they did twenty, thirty years ago.

I shall discuss the reasons given by this leader, though in a different order, and add one of my own at the end.

This same man commented in a May 1989 interview: "We are failing now because we have succeeded too well." French teachers' unions defined their major goals in the early twentieth century. They sought better salaries and fringe benefits; they have gained them. They sought more job security; they have obtained an unusual level of security for their teachers. They sought improved working conditions; that goal, too, has been largely achieved. They sought more power for teachers and their unions; they succeeded. They have even managed to have their own education reform proposal turned into law. Finally, their once rather unrealistic dream that France might some day be governed by the Left has also been realized. What does a teachers' union do when its mission has been accomplished? Or when its first battle--though not the larger war--has been won?

This dilemma reveals one of the risks inherent in the reformist approach to social transformation. A trade union depends upon a large membership for its power base, and in France membership is voluntary. Thus, union leaders must constantly be concerned about how to motivate people to join. If the union's goal is not piecemeal "bread-and-butter" successes but far-reaching social change, it must continually redefine the issues in such a way that membership is maintained. The FEN and the SNI-PEGC have not done that. Possibly their long years in the political

opposition while France was governed by conservatives prevented them from seeing the necessity of finding new issues as old ones were shelved. Today it is evident in conversations and interviews that leaders are groping for new social issues which will appeal to their constituents. Three which are commonly mentioned are racism, the environment, and the Third World. These are bona fide issues, of course. But as they develop these new issues, the leaders of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC are likely to face yet another dilemma inherent in the reformist position: as problems close to the daily lives of the members are solved, the remaining problems are likely to become increasingly distant and abstract. Thus, it may become increasingly difficult to motivate teachers to join even after the issues are redefined.

Another problem in France as elsewhere is that advanced capitalist economies encourage attitudes which make it difficult to persuade people to join organizations which seek the betterment of broad social groups. In the thirty years between the end of World War II and the first oil crisis France was transformed economically. She changed from a relatively poor, largely rural country to a wealthy, urbanized one with a standard of living comparable to that of the United States. This means that young French teachers differ significantly from the middle-aged leaders of their unions. In an interview in June 1991, a National Secretary of the FEN put it this way:

> In our society there has certainly been an evolution toward increased egoism, individualism. . .Our teachers have become consumers like everyone else. Their concerns are mundane.

This development increases the difficulty of building large membership organizations which have enough power to press for social change. The crisis in the FEN and the SNI-PEGC seems, then, to be yet another instance of the phenomenon described by Michael Harrington:

> The welfare state is a hybrid, too socialist to be completely capitalist, decidedly too capitalist to be socialist. . . .In fact, the "social democratic compromise" has only permitted social measures within an extremely hedonistic, individualistic, late-capitalist culture, and the latter always threatens to corrupt the former.[61]

It is within this general context that one can begin to understand why the organizational structure of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC--a structure which served it well for many years--now seems to be one cause of its crisis. Giving a formal structural role to the three tendencies--the reformists, communists, and anarcho-syndicalists--was important in preserving organizational unity in 1948. At that time the issues raised by the tendencies were meaningful not only to the leaders, but to a substantial number of the members. With the changes which have occurred in French society, the debates between the tendencies are no longer meaningful to the members. A Technical Advisor of the SNI-PEGC said in a May 1991 interview:

> We must renew our discourse. People can't stand the tendencies. All these internal disputes seem futile to them. They don't understand them.

In addition, even the leaders feel that the positions taken by the tendencies have become frozen and thus sterile. Said a reformist National Secretary of the FEN in June 1991: "Our rules are such that we no longer have real debates." One object of the extraordinary convention to restructure the FEN will surely be to

eliminate or greatly modify the tendencies.

A final problem which I have noticed over the years is one which the leaders mention in passing but never address as deeply as they address the other three problems. The FEN and the SNI-PEGC are caught in a delicate and divisive interaction of class and gender. In 1984 the SNI-PEGC commissioned a study of its members. The study revealed that younger teachers differ from older ones in many ways: they are more likely to be women, have more education, come from a higher social class, and are less class conscious.* In a June 1991 interview, a National Secretary of the FEN described one of the problems which this fact causes:

> There is a wide cultural gap between the current leadership of the SNI-PEGC and teachers under 35. The current leaders were recruited at the level of the bac [high school diploma] thirty years ago, and the younger teachers have more education and won't listen to them. It's among the younger teachers that membership is really down.

I can testify from personal experience that the current leadership of the SNI-PEGC is intellectually well qualified. Their grasp of contemporary economic and political issues is more sophisticated than that of their American counterparts. Moreover, they write well and produce a weekly magazine without the assistance of a professional editor. Thus, the attitude described above seems to be based, not upon an objective assessment of the quality of the leadership, but upon social class prejudice.

At the same time, institutionalized sexism is apparent in both the FEN and the SNI-PEGC. Only one woman currently serves on the Executive Committee of each organization. At the two day confer-

ence, Vivre à l'École [Living in school], which I attended in June 1991 an audience with a large female representation listened to speakers and presenters who were almost all male. At the National Federal Council which I attended during the same week almost all the delegates were men. Moreover, in union publications pictures not only of union activities, but also of students, teachers, and the general public usually depict groups which are 70-90% male. Even the military and religious metaphors which the leaders often use in talking of their work have a distinctly masculine ring to them.

It would be unfair to suggest that the union leaders are unaware of the sexism in their organizations. They officially support full equality between men and women, and the lack of women in leadership positions concerns them. It is also true that they are not solely responsible for the problem. In France as elsewhere women are expected to assume a disproportionate share of domestic duties and thus have little time to attend union meetings. Yet it would be naive to believe that this institutional sexism does not communicate a negative message to many women teachers. Given the double problem of class and gender bias in these two organizations, it is not surprising that there is a gulf between leaders and members. What is, perhaps surprising, is that the membership problem did not begin sooner.

CONCLUSION

The FEN and the SNI-PEGC provide an interesting "outside point" from which to look at American teachers' unions. Readers

will be able to make the obvious comparisons between the French unions and their American counterparts. One point does seem worth emphasizing, however. By most standards the FEN and the SNI-PEGC have to be considered far more successful unions than the AFT and the NEA. Yet they are in deeper crisis. The current crisis of these French unions and of labor movements generally provide part of the context within which American teachers' unions should be studied. The exact nature of the crisis and its dimensions are not yet clear. The events within the FEN and the SNI-PEGC between now and the end of the century may provide some important clues.

ENDNOTES

1. C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 246.

2. Roger Duclaud-Williams, "Teacher Unions and Educational Policy in France." In Martin Lawn (Ed.) The Politics of Teacher Unionism: International Perspectives (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 73-102.

3. Gilles Martinet, Sept syndicalismes [Seven types of trade unionism] (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979).

4. The SNI-PEGC has had three names and acronyms during its 72-year history. From 1920 until the Liberation (1944) it was called the National Union (Syndicat National or SN). Between 1944 and 1976 it was called the National Union for Elementary Teachers (Syndicat National d'Instituteurs or SNI). In the mid-1970s the government reorganized the school system by setting up comprehensive middle schools. This led to the current name. For the sake of simplicity the current name will be used throughout this paper.

5. "Élu de la crise" [Chosen by the crisis], L'Humanité, 17 June 1991, 28; "Les instits reprennent les rênes de la FEN" [The elementary teachers rein in the FEN again], Libération, 17 June 1991, 24.

6. Hervé Baro, "La FEN a rendez-vous avec l'histoire" [The FEN has a rendez-vous with history], L'Enseignement Public, October 1990, 6-7.

7. Gisèle and Serge Berstein, La Troisième République [The Third Republic], (Paris: MA Éditions, 1987); Albert Guérard, France: A Modern History (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1959); Carlton J. H. Hayes, France: A Nation of Patriots (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974); David Thomson, Democracy in France since 1870 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

8. Jean Cornec, Josette et Jean Cornec, Instituteurs [Josette and Jean Cornec, elementary teachers] (Paris: Éditions Clancier-Guénaud, 1981); Hayes, France: A Nation of Patriots; Félix Ponteil, Histoire de l'Enseignement en France: les Grandes Étapes, 1789-1964 [History of education in France: the major stages, 1789-1964] (n.p.: Sirey, 1966); Antoine Prost; David Thomson, France: Emprie and Republic, 1850-1940: Historical Documents (New York: Walker and Company, 1968).

9. James Marangé, De Jules Ferry à Ivan Illich [From Jules Ferry to Ivan Illich] (N.p.: Stock, 1976).

10. Marangé, De Jules Ferry à Ivan Illich (N.p.: Stock, 1976), 16. This and all other quotations from French written sources and interview transcripts have been translated into English by me.

11. Between 1984 and 1991 I conducted a number of interviews of top leaders in the FEN and the SNI-PEGC. In some cases, as in this one, I promised confidentiality. When possible, interviewees will be identified by name; otherwise, their position and the date of the interview will be identified either in the text or in a footnote.

12. Marangé, De Jules Ferry à Ivan Illich, 9.

13. Henri Aigueperse, Cent ans de syndicalisme [A hundred years of trade unionism] (N. p.: Éditions Martinsart, 1977); Jean-Claude Barbarant, Les enfants de Condorcet [Condorcet's children] (N. p.: Stock, 1989); Jean Cornec, Josette et Jean Cornec, Instituteurs; James Marangé, "Ava[illegible]ropos: Les Antécedents" [Foreword. The Antecedents]. In Rob[illegible]éramy's La Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale: 25 ans [illegible] syndicale [The National Education Federation: 25 years of trade union unity] (Paris: EPI, 1974), 8-12.

14. Aigueperse, Cent ans de syndicalisme: 25-26.

15. Claude Lavy, "Révolution et réformisme" [Revolution and reformism], L'École libératrice (March 17, 1990), 7.

16. Aigueperse, Cent ans de syndicalisme; Lavy, "Révolution et réformisme."

17. Aigueperse, Cent ans de syndicalisme; Lavy, "Révolution et réformisme; Gilles Martinet, Sept syndicalismes [Seven types of trade unionism] (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979); Jacques Marie and François Printanier, interview with author, Paris, France, 16 July 1986.

18. Aigueperse, Cent ans de syndicalisme; Lavy, "Révolution et réformisme."

19. Marangé, De Jules Ferry à Ivan Illich, 196.

20. Throughout this paper, I shall refer to the teachers of the école system as "elementary teachers" since there is no English equivalent for instituteur.

21. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet, 85.

22. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet; James M. Clark, Teachers and Politics in France (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1967); Cornec, Josette et Jean Cornec, Instituteurs; Marangé, De Jules Ferry à Ivan Illich.

23. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet; James M. Clark, Teachers and Politics in France; Cornec, Josette et Jean Cornec, Instituteurs.

24. Cornec, Josette et Jean Cornec, Instituteurs.

25. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet.

26. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet.

27. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet.

28. Luc Bentz, "Une conquête syndicale à préserver" [A union conquest to preserve], L'École Libératrice, 29 September 1990, 7.

29. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet, 121.

30. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet.

31. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet, 107.

32. Robert O. Paxton, Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 156.

33. Robert Chéramy, La Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale; Marangé, "Avant-Propos: Antécédents."

34. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet; Chéramy, La Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale; Marangé, "Avant-Propos: Antécédents."

35. Barbarant, Les Enfants de Condorcet; Chéramy, La Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale; Marangé, De Jules Ferry à Ivan Illich.

36. Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale, Statuts [Constitution] (a supplement to FEN-Hebdo, 28 December 1982); La FEN, brochure, 1]83; Claude Lavy, "Le syndicat: comment ça fonctionne?" (The union: How does it work?), L'École Libératrice, 30 March 1985, 26-27; Syndicat National Des Institutrices, Instituteurs et P.E.G.C., Statuts [Constitution], photocopy.

37. These tendencies had other names in the past; for the sake of simplicity I am using only their current names.

38. This description of the way the tendencies function is based on reading the official magazines of the FEN and the SNI-PEGC, L'École Libératrice and L'Enseignement Public from 1984 to 1992. It is also based upon attendance as an observer at a meeting of the National Federal Council in 6-7 June 1991.

39. Aigueperse, Cent ans de syndicalisme, 17.

40. Jean-Claude Barbarant, "Social Justice," L'École Libératrice, 2 December 1989, 5.

41. Yannick Simbron, "Trois leçons pour changer" [Three lessons about change], L'Enseignement Public, March 1991, 3.
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46. Claude Lavy, letter to author, 20 March 1985; Claude Lavy, "Se syndiquer? Bof! Et pourtant. . ." [Join a union? Nonsense! And yet. . .], L'École Libératrice, 14 October 1989, 16.

47. This paragraph is based on a regular reading of L'École Libératrice, 1984-1992; Claude Lavy, letter to author, 25 February 1992; Jean-Paul Roux, interview with author, Paris, France, 4 July 1984; Jean-Paul Roux, letter to author, 8 February 1987.

48. Bentz, "Une conquête syndicale à préserver."

49. Gauthier, Guignon, and Guillot, Les Instits, 188.

50. Claude Lavy, letter to author, 25 February 1992; Jean-Paul Roux, interview with author, Paris, France, 4 July 1984.

51. Claude Lavy, letter to author, 25 February 1992.

52. Jean Cornec and Michel Bouchareissas, L'Heure laïque [Time for public education] (Paris: Clancier-Guénaud, 1982); Gérard Leclerc, La Bataille de l'école [The battle over the school] (Paris: Denoël, 1985).

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54. Interview with a National Secretary and a Technical Advisor to the SNI-PEGC, Paris, France, 30 May 1991; interview with a National Secretary of the FEN, Paris, France, 13 June 1991.

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56. Gauthier, Guignon, and Guillot, Les Instits.

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58. Observation of National Federal Council meeting, Paris, France, 6-7 June 1991.

59. Observation of National Federal Council meeting, Paris, France, 6-7 June 1991.

60. "La FEN déclenche le siège ejectable de son patron" [The FEN shoots its boss out of its ejection-seat], Libération, 11 June 1991, 2; "M. Yannick Simbron est évincé de la direction de la FEN" [Mr. Yannick Simbron is ousted from FEN leadership], Le Monde, 12 June 1991, 38.

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